

PRESS RELEASE

Congressman John Conyers, Jr.

Fourteenth District, Michigan
Ranking Member, Committee on the Judiciary
Dean, Congressional Black Caucus

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
October 15, 2001

CONTACT:
Ray Plowden (313) 961-5670

Conyers on Antiterrorism Bill:
"Grave Damage to Our Constitution"

_____ Reacting to the House passage of the antiterrorism bill, Congressman John Conyers, Jr., Ranking Member of the House Judiciary Committee and Dean of the Congressional Black Caucus, issued the following statement:

"Since the September 11 terrorist attacks, I became convinced that our antiterrorism laws needed to be updated. I agreed with the Attorney General that, in the age of disposable cell phones and email in cyberspace, our laws needed to be modernized. I worked with the Republican Chairman of the Judiciary Committee, Jim Sensenbrenner, to craft a bipartisan bill that passed the Committee 36 to zero.

Because he didn't get everything he wanted, the Attorney General pulled the old bait and switch. In the dark of night in backrooms of the Capitol, a new bill was written by the Administration and placed on the House floor. Not one Member of Congress had read it when it came up for a vote. We have read it now and it would do grave damage to our Constitution.

Unlike the bipartisan bill, the Republicans-only bill would sunset long after this crisis had ended – five years after the President signs it. Unlike the bipartisan bill, this bill would allow for sneak and peek secret searches, where law enforcement could search an individual's home and indefinitely delay notification that the house had been searched.

Unlike the bipartisan bill, there is no provision protecting our own citizens from CIA wiretaps. Unlike the bipartisan bill, there is no provision insuring that the government does not introduce information obtained from illegal wiretaps in court. Unlike the bipartisan bill, there is no provision limiting the sharing of sensitive law enforcement information to appropriate personnel. Unlike the bipartisan bill, there is no provision protecting immigrants from being deported for donating money to groups they did not know were terrorists.

I hope we can return to a more bipartisan process and a better bill in conference."

